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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1 September 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Are UN resolutions violating Human Rights?

According to UN documents on Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM), the whole theory behind economic sanctions appears to be inaccurate, because pressure on civilians does not translate into political changes in the governments. In addition, according to the same documents:

- Sanctions should not "target civilians who are not involved with the threat to peace or international security".
- Sanctions should not interfere with the free flow of humanitarian goods … nor essential medical provisions or educational materials of any kind. [1]

It must be said with deepest regret that in the case of economic sanctions imposed on Iran, none of the criteria stated in UN documents about sanctions were observed. Instead, the sanctions targeted the most vulnerable people in the society: All patients' access to medicine and medical equipment were seriously limited as the result. Patients with chronic disease whose lives rely on receiving medicine are the ones to suffer the most from the sanctions which have seriously affected "deliveries of medicine and raw materials for Iranian pharmaceutical companies".[2]

Apart from availability of medicine, the sanctions weaken medical infrastructure, straining the ability of the health system to provide services and to respond to medical emergencies. Sanctions can be considered as a silent method of killing people, especially for those who are tolerating chronic diseases or emergency situations.

Medicines which are particularly affected by the sanctions include chronic disease medicines such as leukemia and thalassemia as well as vaccines to treat and protect infants, antibiotics and supplies for diagnostic equipment.

Although medical items and humanitarian goods such as food, are exempted from sanctions imposed on Iran, but the sanctions' effects, for example on financial transactions, cause medicine and food shortages that have a negative impact on hospitals, medical-research centers and the whole society.

The sanctions are proved to lead to humanitarian disasters, jeopardizing the lives of patients while failing to meet their own objectives. The bitter reality is that they are taking the toll on the patients while violating all human rights specially the fundamental rights of ordinary civilians. Sanctions aggravate imbalances in income distribution, hamper the process of development, weaken the civil society organizations, ban foreign financial humanitarian aids, generate unethical businesses, affect the most vulnerable people including the poor and the sick, and in the long run ruin the infrastructures of societies.

All these sufferings occur in spite of the fact that human rights are guaranteed in Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights covenants including International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

It is paradoxical that on the one hand, sanctions are imposed on counties for decades, making the innocent civilians to suffer the adverse consequences and on the other hand UN documents ban the sanctions from having adverse effects on "civilians" and "humanitarian goods."

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1. http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/WCM/MarcBossuyt_WorkshopUnilateralCoerciveSeminar.pdf
2. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/sanctions-take-toll-on-irans-sick/2012/09/04/ce07ee2c-f6b2-11e1-8253-3f495ae70650_story.html

Another even ridiculous contradiction is that, in Iran, despite the nuclear deal and the promises on removing the economic sanctions, there are still restrictions on patient's access to medicine which was supposed to exempt from the sanctions but in practice it is not.

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) considers sanctions as methods of legalizing systematic violation of human rights and urges the Human Rights Council to make every effort to protect the human rights of the Iranian civilians and remove "all" economic sanctions imposed on Iran.